

Syrian Civil War



STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

The Syrian civil war began on 15 March 2011 as demonstrators began protesting against the Ba'ath Political Party, who has ruled the Syrian government for nearly five decades. These protestors are attempting to topple President Bashar al-Assad's regime that has long benefitted the wealthy minority and left the majority of the Syrian people without many rights. The Syrian civil war is part of a larger revolutionary wave known as the Arab Spring where other countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen have also protested against their governments demanding more democratic rights and fairer electoral processes that represent more people. In order to quell the demonstrations, the Syrian government has openly fired on civilians, and the violence has escalated to levels that have violated human rights. This conflict has now run onto 18 months without any resolutions, and the international community, along with Syria, is hopeful for a ceasefire, and a peaceful end to the crisis.



DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

HOULA MASSACRE

A recent example of the violent measures taken on by the Syrian government is the Houla massacre. The attack took place on May 25, 2012 by Shabiha militias and Syrian troops on unarmed civilians. The Shabiha are armed men dressed in civilian clothing to blend with the Syrian people and assault protestors against Assad's regime. According to the United Nations, 108 people were killed, including 34 women and 49 children from artillery and tank rounds. The UN concluded that this massacre constituted a war crime authorized by Assad.

REBELS RESPONSE

The rebels have also begun arming themselves and forming an opposition unit called the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which formed in July 2011 composed of defected Syrian Armed Forces personnel and volunteers. In retaliation of the government crackdown, the FSA has targeted key

figures in the Assad regime. On 18 July 2012, a bombing occurred at the National Security headquarters in Damascus killing and injuring top military and security officials. As such, protests in the larger cities of Syria: Aleppo, the capital Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Daraa and Deir are still continuing.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The estimates of the death toll in the Syrian Civil War vary between 20,000 and 32,025 people. However, the real problem that has emerged from this conflict is that of refugees, which have totaled at around 200,000-250,000. Refugees of the Syrian Civil War are Syrian people who have fled their country to get away from the violence. It is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult to host these refugees and provide them with basic needs such as shelter, clothing, food and water. These refugees have fled to neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq.



Refugee Camp in Jordan

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Including the refugees, the UN believes about 2 million people inside Syria is also in need of humanitarian aid. The aid provided by the United States alone has topped \$100 million, and the countries around the globe have donated what they can to the cause.

The conflict in Syria has the Middle East worried for its general peace and security. Countries neighboring Syria are worrying about a potential spillover effect that could lead to more problems and more violence. At this point, there is a global consensus that a resolution must be formed but the question remains how to reach that resolution and whose interests to keep in mind.